

J.E. Oswalt & Sons

Planning For The Fourth Generation

by N. Eugene Brymer

In 1927 a young man named Julian Earl Oswalt and his bride Lollie Bell Anderson founded a structural moving company on Chinquapin Church Road near Batesburg, SC. Four generations later the same company is still in the same location and has a reputation of completing the hard jobs, safely, on time and within budget.

Julian had worked for a road construction company moving houses off highway rights-of-ways when he decided to go on his own. He started with a flatbed truck, a stump puller, mules, rollers and screw jacks. His son, Julian Earl Jr. ("Junebug" as he is well known) and his wife Sallie Abney joined the firm in 1946. Junebug and Sallie had three sons all of whom followed their parents into the business.

The eldest son Gary and his wife, Cindy joined the firm full time in 1971. Gary is currently Vice-President and Treasurer. David Ervin and wife Kim signed on in 1972. David currently serves as President. The

third son, Jeff Lee, joined his brothers in 1980. Jeff handles jobs as they arise and helps coordinate assignments from David and Gary.

Being a "family" business, early on the sons started each morning by having breakfast with Junebug and Sallie. After their mother died in 2001 "the boys" continued to have breakfast each morning with their father when they were in Batesburg. After an accident that broke his hip, Junebug's "care giver" Frances Williamson now prepares the traditional morning breakfast.

The Oswalts "put their money where their mouth is," as the old saying goes. Grandfather Julian and Lollie Bell began their married life in a "moved in" house. Later Julian Sr. moved the structure so son Jr. could construct a house at the same location. Junebug would later "move in" another structure to enlarge the home place. Eldest son Gary and his family reside in a "moved in" house as does Jeff and his



Founding couple Julian E and Lollie Bell Oswalt



Second-generation owners Julian E. & Sallie A. Oswalt, Jr.



Original residence of founder Julian E. & Lollie Oswalt being relocated as a residence for Julian E. Jr. and Lollie. Junebug. is shown on the upper balcony. The children on the cab of the truck are Gary (front) and David Oswalt. The structure was subsequently destroyed by fire.

family. David's family continues to live in a house constructed by grandfather Julian. The "family" has a "moved in" house on Isle of Palms, an exclusive beachfront on the Atlantic Ocean across from Charleston, SC in site of famous Fort Sumter and another "moved in" residence on Lake Murray, a 50,000 acres lake northwest of the Capitol City of Columbia, SC. Lake Murray was formed in 1931 when a 2.5 miles long earthen dam was constructed by South Carolina Electric & Gas (SCE&G) to generate electricity. At the time it was the largest earthen dam in the world.

When being interviewed for this article Gary and David's response to the question "Tell me about the background of your family ancestry and the history of this company" was short and simple. "There is not a lot to tell," they said. "Our family is of German descent, our granddad started the company right here in this location in 1927 and we have been here ever since." When one walks around the sprawling yard, however, observing modern equipment, loads of steel, multiple buildings, sectional barges (11 of them) and the white picket fences that line the highway for miles in front of "the place" one can't help but assume "there is a lot to tell." While driving is still the mode of choice to visit sites of most jobs, David often pilots a four seat Cessna 172 in the Southeast in order to cover more territory to view and bid on possible projects.

The firm currently has 16 fulltime and 2 part-time employees. The average employee has been with the



Moving a church building in the mid 1960s. (L-R) Junbug Oswalt, Jackie Merritt (in white shirt) Jimmy Merritt, Jean Ray Merritt, Jeff Oswalt, David Oswalt (sitting on fender), Gary Oswalt and Eugene Addison.



An early move by the fledging Oswald company



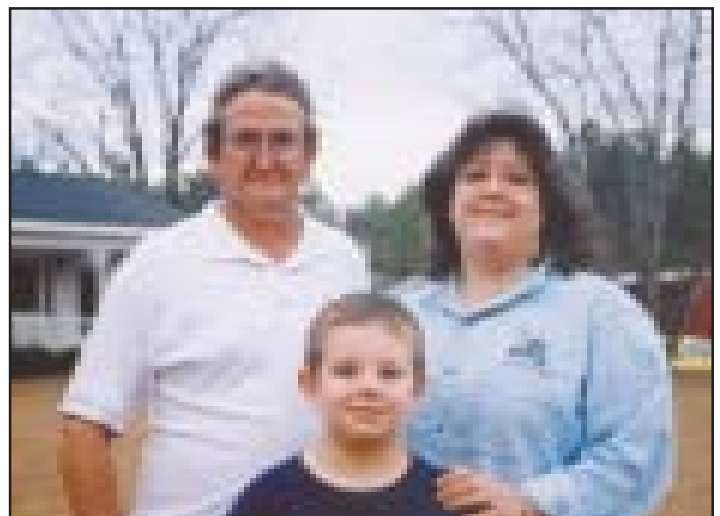
David, Jeff, Julian E., Jr. and Gary Oswald



Daniel, David, Kim, who handles payroll and other duties at the company, David, Jr. and Jennifer Oswald



Gary, Cindy, who has worked for the firm but is presently a financial secretary for a local elementary school in Gilbert, SC, Garrett and Jared Oswald



Jeff, stepson Davis Saunders and Debbie Oswald



The company has 11 Sectional Barges.

company 8-10 years. In fact one employee, Chris Merritt's grandfather, James Merritt, began work for the company in the early 1960s, followed by his father Jimmy. Chris is the third generation working for J.E. Oswalt & Sons and is currently serving as a Project Manager. Gary's son Garrett is a fulltime employee while son Jared is a student of Midland Tech in Columbia and works part time with the company. "The jury is still out" said President David, "as to whether his children will join the firm in a fulltime capacity, however

To read the rest of this story and other articles in this issue of Structural Mover, contact IASM for information on Membership. Structural Mover is published by IASM for members. As a member you receive all issues of the Structural Mover



Bridge ramps, steel and cribbing are in abundant supply.



Fourth generation members Daniel, Garrett, David, Jr. and Jared Oswalt



Family member employees on the front steps of the company office building are, (left to right) Gary, Vice-President and Treasurer, David E., President, David Jr., Jared, Daniel, Garrett and Kim Oswalt.